

Phonics Rhymes

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Phonics teaching in Japan has had its problems when put to practical use. Students who grow up in an English-speaking environment can easily associate the sounds with the alphabet letters; however, to other students, who lack the early years exposure to these sounds, find it difficult in recalling them. These students need a better method in remembering those foreign sounds that lead to reading.

We have developed a program that uses phonics in a blend of vowels and consonants. This sight-reading approach is set in a rhythmical cadence for the students to practice. We call this program PHONICS RHYMES.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES

1.1 PHONICS THROUGH SOUNDS

This Phonics Rhymes program exposes students to English letters in a rhythmical form. This helps them to capture the intonation and phrasing.

The students listen to words and immediately repeat in fast tempo. In this way they naturally learn proper pronunciation. Rhythmical repeating of these rhyming words makes them clearly sound out the vowels. In addition, the fast tempo drill causes the students to avoid unnecessary vowel sounds.

In turn, they can gradually move somewhat effortlessly into text reading.

The overall improvement in their pronunciation naturally leads to effective reading and writing skills.

1.2 PRESENT PHONICS APPROACH IN JAPAN

Generally in Japan, students are taught phonics rules in addition to single letter sounds. Presently, learning single letter sounds of the entire alphabet is the basic premise of phonics in general.

However, this approach takes immense amount of time for ESL students to master. And ESL students are not familiar to native English sounds.

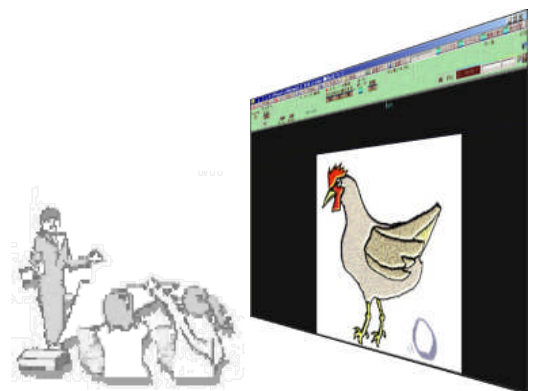
Therefore, their pronunciation sounds Japanese rather than English. It is called "katakana eigo".

In addition, phonics rules have many

exceptions that cause students to become confused. For example "come, some, love, dove, glove, move, prove" does not follow the silent "E" rule like "dome, home, Rome, stove, grove."

Our new phonics approach "Phonics Rhyme" is not to teach students the number of rules as a step in introducing reading techniques. But instead we approach it in a manner that is easy to begin reading practice. Phonics Rhyme approach is to practice common set letter groups in a rhythmical and rhythmic jingle style manner. This technique showed immediate results in early students.

2. LESSON FLOW



1.1 STEP 1 / Card1 / Listen & Speak

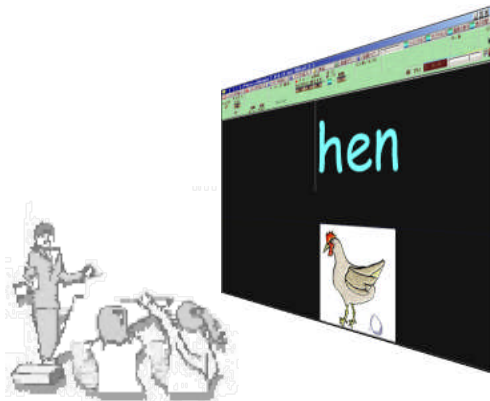
In the beginning, Phonics Rhyme Cards are used to introduce 18 new words.

The students focus on the picture and the sound

along with a text simultaneously. The text is first very small and next much larger. The simple illustrations make it easier to understand the meaning of the words with minimal use of Japanese directions. The instructor can vary the way words are introduced to keep the students interested as well as challenging them.

With clear sound and large illustrations, students can learn the words quickly.

1.2 STEP 2 / Card2 / Listen & Speak



The text becomes much larger than in Step 1.

The students watch the letters along with the sound simultaneously. Then they can learn the sound of the letters. Students begin to read the words naturally.

1.3 STEP 3 / Tri-Card / Listen & Speak



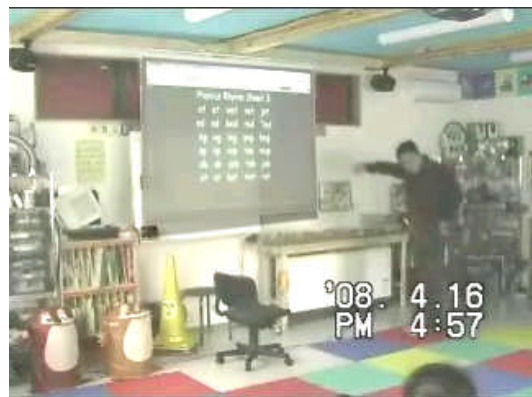
The students practice with three rhyming words that are grouped together as illustration and repeated in quick tempo.

The two-letter syllable is repeated twice followed by the three family words illustrations.

The students practice the words through the pictures.

They will learn the meaning of the words in preparation for the next step.

1.4 STEP 4 / List / Listen & Speak



Phonics Rhyme List is used as a drill in repeating the sounds and words without pictures. The entire list of words is seen all at once.

Sounding out the syllables followed by the 3 words family, the students can tune themselves to the correct pronunciation without much effort.

Pronunciation is enhanced through rhythmical drills. Basically the consonants are clearly heard as well as the vowels. That is the consonants are pronounced as consonants without vowels following them like Japanese sounds.

1.5 STEP 5 / Text / Listen & Speak



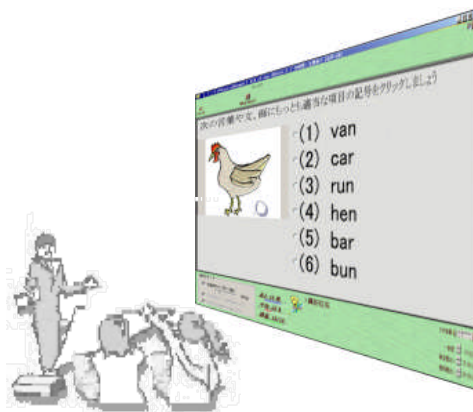
From step 1 to 4 students have been practicing single words.

And now step 5 this drill incorporates those

words within a sentence. In addition other words are included as a means to make a complete sentence. These words are colored in black and the practiced words are in red. The expectations were that they could read the red words but in actual practice they learned to read the black words as well. Since these black words appear often in other sentences, students naturally learn them. Actually teachers gave little instructions on how to read them.

The students tend to read in phrases unlike the staccato reading of past students who practiced phonics in Japan. The intonation is very natural and fluid. This makes it easy to listen and understand for native speakers of English.

1.6 EXERCISE / e-Games / Listen & Speak

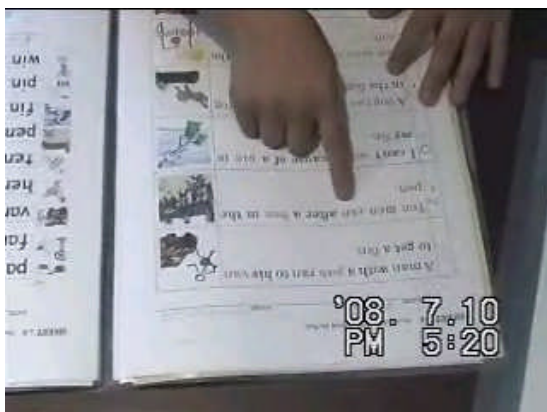


After the students can relatively read out loud, they can begin training by use of several different word games.

These games involve hearing, reading, dictating and understanding in an amusing format.

The students can playfully practice with little stress.

From the instructor's view point this is a very good observation time to see how much the students have achieved recognition of these words. And also it allows the instructors to move ahead or review once more according to the student's present level.



1.7 EXERCISE PRINT / Drills / Read & WRITE



In the final stages of the sections, students can put to use what they have been practicing.

In these drills, their ability to recognize, read and write is developed further by building confidence.

However, it is important not to be too critical of their mistakes.

The objective is to reinforce their lesson content.

3. SUMMARY

Within less than a year of practicing this phonics rhyme program, students were able to read actual sentences with some understanding.

The student's pronunciation improved greatly as well as letter recognition.

The intonation is very natural and fluid.

Natural phrasal reading has taken hold.

Students' confidence in reading has grown.

- A The students take to the sound focused program with great interest.
- B Through clear audio letter recognition is enhanced.
- C The students learn natural phrasing and pronunciation.
- D This vowel emphasized drill is suitable for ESL Japanese students.
- E Phonics Rhyme Method shows great potential.

Software System



This computer assisted language lesson consists of the use of a computer, a projector, a screen, a speaker system and a movie-Boxed. Showering the students with sound and large illustrations along with text, is the main element of the lesson. The average number of students in a class is 10.

The classroom in general does not have to have internet access or a special computer lab setting. Any classroom can be used for this type of lesson.



The phonics rhyme program is contained in the movie-Boxed unit. By connecting this unit into the USB port, the instructor can immediately use it. The lesson plan can be prepared at home by connecting the unit to the computer. Then the unit can be taken to the school computer for classroom use.



This unit also contains multi-media player Mint and other lesson materials: Mother Goose nursery rhymes, phonics rhymes, chants, songs, stories, vocabulary list, and movies with motion-flash card program...

This Player Mint can simultaneously presents sound, pictures and text, in various format. For example, in single words, phrases, or sentences that can be repeated, silenced, reviewed, and set at different speeds or tempo. The instructor can quickly search and find sections that is needed for presentation.

The advantage of using this program is for the students to learn the meaning of the words without the need for Japanese translation. Through the illustrations as they are hi-lighted to show the focus of the word, phrases and sentences, the

students naturally learn the meaning.



With this program, ESL students are exposed to native English speaking (sounds with meaning) environment as a basis for learning English.

Reference

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